

REVIEWS OF BOOKS.

A TREATISE ON DISEASES OF THE RECTUM, ANUS AND SIGMOID FLEXURE. By JOSEPH M. MATTHEWS, M.D. New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1893. 8vo, pp. 537, with six chromolithographs, and numerous illustrations.

That so large a book as this, confined to so narrow a field, should be issued at this time, when the English language already contains so many others devoted to the same theme which present the present state of the pathology and treatment of the diseases in question, argues a confidence both by the author and publishers in a great interest in this subject in this country. As the reader perceives the enthusiasm and the diligence which the author evidently brings to his own labors in his chosen field, one quickly feels, however, that this book has an individuality of its own. Insensibly one is led to see everything with the author's eyes, and to realize that the reason for this book being in existence is to be found in the special views and practice of Dr. Matthews himself, and that as these are valuable or susceptible of criticism, does the worth of the book appear or diminish. There is a breezy positiveness, a dogmatic assertiveness, a polemical combativeness, running through the book which makes it very interesting reading. Withal, its teachings are in the main sound and wholesome, and its wide circulation cannot fail to encourage the development of better views and sounder practice in diseases of the rectum and anus.

The author states in his preface that for fifteen years he has been a rectal specialist, and on the title page he is announced as a professor of the principles and practice of surgery in a medical school. The two announcements raise a train of curious speculation in one's mind as to how the two things can be harmonized, particularly in view of

his further statement a few pages farther on that he has been the first reputable surgeon in the United States or Europe to make a specialty of rectal diseases, meaning, evidently, the restriction of attention to these diseases exclusively. Reading on a little farther we find him speaking of the frequency of the existence of uterine and ovarian troubles, together with rectal disease in women, with the advice that whenever such a condition should be suspected the aid of a gynecologist should be called in, and in yet another place the assistance of a specialist in the genito-urinary diseases of males is invoked. One cannot but feel that there is something wrong when the human pelvic organs have to be split up in this way. The surgeon who confines himself to the reproductive organs of the female, or the genito-urinary tract of the male, or the defecatory apparatus of both sexes, certainly has a very narrow path in which to walk. It ought not to put too great a strain upon the cerebrating apparatus of one man to acquire a good working familiarity with all the organs of the pelvis in both sexes. If we mistake not, the trend of enlightened surgical sentiment at the present moment is against undue specialism, particularly that which artificially cuts off for itself a special segment of a general apparatus.

Visions of Anthony Comstock and the Society for the Suppression of Vice must have dictated the choice of the cuts which illustrate the positions recommended for rectal examinations, for the parts involved are all fully covered from view by well-made pantaloons in each instance. This part of the book contains a first-class, entirely needless, advertisement of a very cumbrous and somewhat complicated sofa, the name and address of the manufacturing company which makes it being specially given. All this, when a plain ordinary cheap four-legged table is unexcelled for the purpose. When the author comes to speak of illuminating apparatus, the same kind of advertisement of a special electric apparatus is inserted. Aside from these flaws, and the too free use of the style of the clinical lecturer who is talking to students, the chapter on examinations is an excellent one. He praises deservedly the value of the finger as an explorer, and con-

demns the use of bougies and rectal sounds for purposes of exploration. He describes a good bivalve wire-bladed anal dilator, and briefly hints at a rectal endoscope. He is open to criticism in not giving prominence enough to the value and importance of general anæsthetization for physical exploration of the rectum. The second chapter is devoted to anatomical considerations, and is in accord with the present generally-accepted views. It seems peculiar to read of the external sphincter muscle *opening* and closing the anus, but so the text says. Rectal surgeons are warned against unnecessarily injuring this muscle.

After a chapter, each, devoted to constipation and to antiseptics, he comes, in the fifth chapter, to hæmorrhoids, which, with fistula in ano, forms the chief claimant for the attention of the rectal surgeon. Three chapters are given to the discussion of piles and their treatment. External piles he advises to be excised. The chapter on internal piles is a strong one; he gives vigorous and well defended reasons for his teachings that palliative treatment is to be discouraged, for if real piles are present they can be cured only by operation. The best treatment for inflamed protruded piles is to remove them at once, after the bowels have been unloaded. He denounces carbolic acid injections, disapproves of treating by crushing, uses the clamp and cautery only in exceptional cases, does not regard simple excision with torsion of divided vessels as safe, denies that real internal piles can be cured by simple dilatation of the sphincter, rejects *in toto* Whitehead's operation of excision of the pile-bearing area of mucosa, and finally advocates warmly the routine practice of ligating piles as the method most simple and effectual, the freest from pain and danger, and attended with the most speedy convalescence. The description of all the details and precautions to be observed which may contribute to success in the ligation of piles is full, clear and practical. In several places in the book, as on page 167 in this connection, the application of "boiling-hot" water to the anus is recommended. Doubtless, an excellent hæmostatic measure, but likely to be attended with inconveniences that would limit the frequency of its applicability.

For fistula in ano, his remedy is the knife. He strongly brings out the importance, after first laying open the main sinus, of hunting out and laying open all secondary sinuses. His remarks upon operating for fistulæ in phthisical patients are very just and in accordance with common sense.

As to irritable ulcer or fissure of the anus, he is emphatic in the statement that a simple divulsion of the sphincter will cure the vast majority of fissures. If the knife is to be used at all it is simply to scarify the ulcer proper, not to be carried into healthy tissue, much less to divide the sphincter itself.

Chapter XV is devoted to non-malignant strictures of the rectum. He rules out absolutely dysentery as a cause of such stricture, *giving* good grounds for his opinion. More than half of all cases he believes to be due to syphilitic gummata. In the treatment of strictures in the lower three or four inches, he prefers divulsion and incision; stricture higher up calls for colotomy.

To cancer of the rectum three chapters are devoted. The histology and pathology of malignant growths of the rectum are dismissed by referring the reader to a book by another author, while the present author goes on to consider matters of diagnosis. One is quite prepared, therefore, to find that he has but little use for the microscope as a diagnostic aid. This part of the book is not up to the standard of other parts. The descriptions are diffuse, involved and confused, and do not well represent present knowledge on the subject, but the statements of his practical conclusions, as to radical treatment, are clear and positive. In this part of the treatise the polemic feature is especially marked. Colotomy he believes to be warranted only in the rarest cases, and then only as a *dernier ressort*. When it is to be done, he prefers the lumbar operation. Extirpation is advised in incipient cases, the patients being otherwise in good state. In more advanced cases, with symptoms of obstruction, if close to the anus, he advises to divide the obstructing mass by an internal linear incision; if deep incisions have to be made, the external parts should be divided also. Very little is said about the possibilities of removal of high-lying growths. An entirely inadequate

treatment of the operative conditions likely to be met with in attempts at removal of such growths is found. The chapter is a disappointing one to one who wishes to know the present state of surgical effort in this region, although it is clear and complete enough in its presentment of the author's own views and practice.

Affections of the sigmoid flexure, prolapsus ani, pruritus ani, impacted fæces, villous tumor of the rectum and malformations, each receive attention in the succeeding chapters of the book. We close the book feeling that it has been written for a certain constituency, and that it is admirably adapted by the very features which we might otherwise be most inclined to criticise to gain attention and command *a following*. *It vigorously antagonizes much error; insists upon thoroughness of examination and positiveness of diagnosis; it is radical in matters of safe procedure and conservative in those of more vital moment.* It cannot fail in its special field to promote better and safer work. Though we have not hesitated to point out what seemed to us shortcomings in this work, nevertheless, on the whole, it is worthy of high commendation.

L. S. PILCHER.

THE DISEASES OF CHILDHOOD. By H. BRYAN DONKIN, F.R.C.P.
8vo. 1893. New York: Wm. Wood & Co.

The writer of this book is one of those who takes the position that while childhood offers many distinct and peculiar manifestations of disease, they are not sufficiently distinct to make of them an exclusive specialty. He writes more for general practitioners and advanced students. By far the greater portion of the material presented is taken from his own note-books and personal experience. He presents a very pleasing arrangement of his own ideas based on personal experience. He has devoted himself exclusively to the medical diseases, and, for convenience, has made three classes based upon age. From birth to the end of the second year he refers to as Infancy; from this time to the end of the fourth year he speaks of as Early Childhood; and from the fourth to the fifteenth year he classes as Childhood. The subjects treated are arranged under attractive headings, and throughout the entire book,